

### Amendments to the Claims

Please cancel claims 5-11 without prejudice. Please add new claims 25-27 as set forth below in the listing of claims.

### Listing of Claims

1-11. (Cancelled)

12. (Currently amended) A shaped article made by ~~the~~ a process of claim 5 comprising:

- a) preparing a sol from a silicon alcoxide;
- b) allowing or inducing the hydrolysis of the sol prepared in step a);
- c) adding colloidal silica to the sol that has undergone hydrolysis according to step b) to form a sol mixture;
- d) pouring the sol mixture of step c) into a mould;
- e) allowing the sol mixture in said mould to form a gel and then removing it from said mould;
- f) drying the gel obtained in step e); and
- g) thermally treating the gel dried in step f) at a temperature of 900°C-1500°C to increase its density.

13. (Previously presented) The shaped article of claim 12, wherein said article is a preform that can be used to make optical fibers.

14. (Previously presented) The shaped article of claim 12, wherein said article has a shape selected from the shapes shown in Figure 1.

15. (Previously presented) The shaped article of claim 12, wherein said article has a shape selected from the shapes shown in Figure 2.

16. (Currently amended) ~~A~~ The shaped article made by the process of claim 9 12 wherein the sol formed in step a) of said process further comprises at least one element selected from group IIIa, IVa, Va, IIIb or Vb of the periodic table.

17. (Previously presented) The shaped article of claim 16, wherein said article is a preform that can be used to make optical fibers.
18. (Previously presented) The shaped article of claim 16, wherein said article has a shape selected from the shapes shown in Figure 1.
19. (Previously presented) The shaped article of claim 16, wherein said article has a shape selected from the shapes shown in Figure 2.
20. (Currently amended) A The shaped article ~~made by the process~~ of claim ~~40~~ 16 wherein said element is germanium.
21. (Currently amended) The shaped article of claim ~~40~~ 20, wherein said article is a preform that can be used to make optical fibers.
22. (Previously presented) An optical fiber made from the preform of claim 21.
23. (Previously presented) The shaped article of claim 20, wherein said article has a shape selected from the shapes shown in Figure 1.
24. (Previously presented) The shaped article of claim 20, wherein said article has a shape selected from the shapes shown in Figure 2.
25. (New) The shaped article of claim 12, wherein steps a) to e) in said process are carried out at room temperature.
26. (New) The shaped article of claim 12, wherein the hydrolysis of step b) in said process is induced using an acid or base catalyst.
27. (New) The shaped article of claim 12, wherein said silicon alcoxide of step a) in said process is either tetramethylortosilicate or tetraethylortosilicate.